



Dear Members:

I hope you had a joyful, safe, and happy Easter weekend!

Thank you for your continued resolve in this fight against COVID-19. MRTs and DMSs are making a difference in the detection, treatment and prevention of this virus every day! We need all of you to stay strong, hopeful and optimistic in this fight to end the pandemic and keep Ontarians safe.

Since my last update to you, OAMRS has been very busy answering Member questions, offering support and engaging with the Ministry of Health and our Medical and Allied Health colleagues. Most of our Members concerns have been about personal protective equipment (PPE) procurement and use. In last week's briefing I provided several links pertaining to PPE supply levels and use. Please visit our resource page [here](#) to review this information and check back regularly as we continue to update these pages as more information becomes available. Please continue to send us questions and we will respond to all of them as soon as we can. Thank you for posting your comments and pictures in your PPE at your facilities to social media. Don't forget to tag OAMRS. These comments and pictures are helping show the public and our government that MRTs and DMSs are also very much front-line healthcare workers and subject to the same risks as doctors and nurses in many cases. It is also helping in our collective fight to show urgency for procurement of more PPE as the virus is expected to climax in the coming weeks.

We continue to lobby the Ontario government to procure more PPE and express the vital need for PPE in the primary care setting for the safety of our Members and all front-line health professionals. The Ontario government has placed several orders for PPE but deliveries have been slowed due to the global crisis and supply chains worldwide. The Ford government has also been very proactive about stimulating PPE production in Ontario and Canada and many companies have stepped up. Some deliveries are occurring now and we are expecting to see more PPE production and delivery within our own borders in the coming weeks in addition to the imported supplies.

Ontario hospitals are trying to juggle multiple priorities across all patient care areas for management of this crisis and supply and demand of PPE. Last week we reported that the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH) issued new directives designed to ensure all frontline health care workers have access to required PPE to safely care for patients in primary, acute care settings. [CMOH Directive #1 for Health Care Providers and Health Care Entities – Revised March 30, 2020](#) and [CMOH Directive #5 for Hospitals within the meaning of the *Public Hospitals Act*](#) can be accessed [here](#).

Because of the current shortage of PPE, we are aware that hospitals are exercising contingency measures in efforts to maintain the supply across all patient care areas. This includes performing Point of Care Risk Assessments (PCRA) to determine the most appropriate precautions based on each situation. Other measures may include, reuse of some PPE, more stringent prioritization of PPE use based on PCRA and requesting that healthcare workers be more vigilant in their personal assessments and cleaning measures to try and contain contamination. Be vigilant and purposeful in all your interactions with patients and in public. Your professional judgment in PCRA and choices will make a difference in preventing spread. Please review the CMOH directives above and the guidelines about PCRA and PPE usage by Public Health Ontario linked in last week's update or on our resource page for more detailed information. We need to continue working together with our facilities and public health experts during this difficult time.

For those Members working at Independent Health Facilities (IHF), all of the precautions outlined for MRTs and DMSs working in hospitals are the same for IHFs. A guidance document from the Ministry of Health for IHFs can be found [here](#) and CMOH directives #1 and #2 that apply to Members working in IHFs can be found [here](#).

Many members have expressed concern about not being given N95 masks. Information we have received and reviewed from Public Health Ontario, the World Health Organization (WHO), and other literature has confirmed that COVID-19 is mainly spread through droplet/contact. This means that if a patient sneezes or coughs into the air, the virus does not stay airborne, it settles very quickly on objects like tables, beds and people. The droplets are then spread through contact. Therefore, droplet/contact precautions (surgical mask/gloves/gowns) should be adequate protection unless you are involved in aerosol generating procedures such as intubations/extubations and suctioning. If you are involved in these kinds of procedures then you should wear an N95 mask and use airborne precautions. After consultations with the CMOH and Senior Medical Consultant at the Ontario Ministry of Health, we have confirmed that an N95 mask is not necessary on already intubated patients with a stable airway in the intensive care unit (ICU) unless you are involved in the intubation or extubation procedure itself. We consider the first chest x-ray to confirm tube placement as "being involved in the procedure" and should include MRTs exercising airborne precautions until a stable airway is confirmed. If you have concerns about not receiving adequate PPE for any procedure after you have conducted a PCRA, you should consult with the leader of that primary care area who will assess and make efforts to ensure your safety and provide the necessary PPE as per CMOH directive #5.

It is a difficult time for all organizations particularly small businesses including Independent Health Facilities (IHF). We are aware that many of our Members are experiencing lay-offs during this pandemic. There is financial support available for individuals who are no longer working due to the impact of COVID-19 and for businesses that have experienced significant losses. The Canadian Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) can be accessed [here](#) and Employment Insurance (EI) benefit [here](#).

OAMRS is working hard for you every day. See [here](#) for an update of our programs and services during the pandemic.

To all our MRTs and DMSs, thank you again, on behalf of our head office staff, board of directors and the citizens of Ontario.

Stay strong and keep in touch.

Kindest Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Greg Toffner', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Greg Toffner MHS, RTR
President & CEO